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ABSTRACT

This paper uses symbolic convergence theory and evoked recall or resonance theory in an attempt to explain the phenomenon of "A Prairie Home Companion"--a weekly live radio program broadcast by Minnesota Public Radio featuring music and the "news" from fictional Lake Wobegon as related by Garrison Keillor, the show's originator. The paper first examines symbolic convergence theory and then presents evidence of symbolic convergence or "chaining out" in the products and articles that have grown out of the popularity of the radio show. Evoked recall theory is also explained and examples from the radio show are provided to illustrate the theory. The paper argues that the combination of symbolic convergence and resonance theories creates a hybrid called an evoked vision: the ideas catch and "chain out" because they resonate with experiential memories which are evoked by artful and dramatic cues. A long description of Lake Wobegon and its inhabitants is provided. The paper concludes that the rhetorical vision of Lake Wobegon has chained out to a significant number of persons who have adopted the values of the vision and incorporated it into their own lives. (SRT)

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"Fantasy Themes, Resonance Theory, and the Evoked Vision of Lake Wobegon"

by

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In 1974, Minnesota Public Radio Station KSJN in St. Paul, aired an experimental live radio variety program called " A Prairie Home Companion" (hereafter APHC) for the first time. Its live audience numbered twelve with a gate of less than eight dollars (Minnesota Public Radio, 1984). Its listenership for this first program is unknown. A decade later, the program is distributed by the American Public Radio Network to over 260 public radio stations-- over two thirds of the public radio stations in the country (Skow, J. and White, J., 1985). APHC is regularly heard by an estimated 3-5 million weekly listeners in the U.S., Canada, and Australia (Skow and White) as well as a live audience in the World Theatre of 1,200 ("Lake Wobegon Had"1982). It also has a large peripheral audience in foreign countries who hear the show on tapes sent from home. Its listeners have an almost cult-like devotion to the program, which is second only in popularity to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," an evening news magazine. As a result, public radio stations find that APHC is well worth its considerable expense as it repeatedly generates more pledge dollars during fundraisers than any other program (Lazar, M. "Fundraiser Summary," WNIU-FM, 1980-85).

Regular listeners to APHC develop an almost familial relationship with the regular performers, and many have made the trek to St. Paul to be in attendance during a live

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broadcast. Whereas in the early days tickets for the live broadcasts were inexpensive and relatively easy to get, they now must be reserved months in advance and cost twelve dollars each ("Lake Wobegon Beckons," 1986). Listeners also seem to relate to the show's many hypothetical sponsors. For instance, audience members and radio listeners regularly join in singing the theme song for "Powdermilk Biscuits--the biscuits that give shy people the strength to get up and do what needs to be done." This hypothetical product is the main export of the equally hypothetical town in which they are produced--Lake Wobegon, Minnesota, a town "where all the women are strong; all the men are good looking; and all the children are above average." (Singer, 1982; Pine, 1982). Most listeners can also recount the imaginary events which happen in the hypothetical town and can identify many of the imaginary citizens of Lake Wobegon--Mayor Clint Bunsen, Bob, the banker, Ralph, the grocer, Father Emil and Pastor Inqvist, the two local clergy, Wally and Evelyn of the "Sidetrack Tap," Bud, the town's maintainance man, and many others. This pool of shared knowledge and images is the result of the weekly "News from Lake Wobegon"--a lengthy monologue--which is the centerpiece of the two hour musical variety show. While listeners may visit or read during the interludes of folk, dixieland, bluegrass, country, blues, jazz, Cajun or ethnic music, they all hush when the "News from Lake Wobegon" comes on in the deep, laid-back, baritone

voice of the program's originator, Garrison Keillor. So popular is Keillor's weekly monologue that tapes of selected news segments were the number one best seller in the audio market in the fall of 1985, and Keillor's fictionalized version of the news, Lake Wobegon Stories, was on best seller lists for over thirty weeks in 1985-86 and was number one on fiction book lists for a period of ten straight weeks at the same time ("Best Seller", 1985; Skow and White, 1985). The program and Keillor have been featured in scores of national and local publications, popular and obscure, including the cover story of Time magazine ("Lonesome Whistle Blowing", 1985), and the show itself has traveled to perform before capacity live audiences in cities across the U.S. (Minnesota Public Radio, 1984). Its first nationwide televised performance was over public television on April 26, 1986.

What explanation might be offered for the APHC phenomenon using mass communication theory? After all, live radio variety programing was, for all intents and purposes, dead by the mid 60's, and even recorded popular musical programing was becoming computerized by the 1970s. Are there that many transplanted Minnesotans across the country? Is the program even heard in many small towns whose citizens might identify with Lake Wobegon? And what could possibly make a live radio variety show appealing to television? These questions have several possible dimensions. One

relates to the process by which the program became popular. In other words, how did this program catch the interests of so many listeners? Another dimension relates to the emotional reasons for the appeal of the monologues. In other words, why did the program catch on and with whom? The easy answer to both questions is that Keillor's monologues are always so funny. However, beyond being merely humorous, the monologues often strike a melancholic and even cynical responsive chord in many listeners. Clearly, there is something unique about the show and how it has become so popular, and it is clearly tied to the monologues that people find captivating and even touching. Two contemporary mass communication theories offer possible explanations for the APHC phenomenon. They are E.G. Bormann's "Symbolic Convergence Theory" and Tony Schwartz's "Resonance Theory."

E. G. Bormann's "Symbolic Convergence Theory" offers a possible explanation (Bormann, 1982a,1982b,1985), to the process or "How" dimension of the APHC phenomenon. In fact, the APHC phenomenon itself offers a demonstrative example which validates Symbolic Convergence Theory at the same time. However being a process-oriented theory (i.e., it explains how shared meaning or symbolic convergence occurs), it is unlikely to address the second dimension of the APHC phenomenon--Why has this particular set of shared meanings "chained out" to a particular wide audience, most of whom

are not from Minnesota nor have never even visited there. Here the "Evoked Recall or Resonance Theory" of Tony Schwartz offers a possible answer (Schwartz, 1973 and 1981). Taken together, these two theories can explain not only the process by which APHC has established a distinctive mass market for itself but the reasons why its listeners are so spellbound by the often satirical and sometimes bitter humor of "The News From Lake Wobegon." Further, the theories can help explain why APHC should have caught on now and with the particular market segment which forms its target audience. Let us briefly examine these two theories of mass communication.

Symbolic Convergence Theory

Symbolic Convergence Theory, as proposed by E.G. Bormann, has been applied through a methodology called Fantasy Theme Analysis in a variety of contexts by Bormann, his students and others (Bormann, 1972, 1973, 1974, 1982, 1984, and 1985, Cragan, 1975, Cragan and Sheilds, 1977, 1980, Hensley, 1975, Kidd, 1975, Koester, 1982, Kroll, 1983, and Rarick,et.al.,1977). The theory grew out of Bormann's research of an early mass communication form--religious and reform public speaking. As Bormann chronicles the development of his theory in his recent book The Force of Fantasy: Restoring the American Dream, his work on religious and reform speaking was occurring at about the same time

that Robert F. Bales at Harvard was explicating a key dynamic in group interaction--the power of group-created fantasies to develop a social reality for groups. As Bormann reports:

> " Mulling over the materials for my book in the history of religious and reform speaking at the same time as I was caught up in these exciting new developments in small group communication resulted in one of those exhilarating moments of illumination when it seemed clear to me that the force of fantasy is just as strong in mass communication as it is in small group interaction."(Bormann, 1985).

Symbolic Convergence Theory has several key features. Prime among them is the shared group fantasy in which symbolic convergence or shared meaning develops for certain images, words, anecdotes, values, fables, allegories, or narratives. As Bormann puts it "The most important element of dramatizing messages. . .is a narrative or story about real or fictitious people in a dramatic situation or setting other than the here-and-now communication of the group," (Bormann, 1985). This narrative becomes a group product as various members add their own details to the story in a process called "chaining out" which is one of several indicators of symbolic convergence. In Symbolic Convergence Theory, "fantasy" refers to the interpretation of events which serves important psychological and rhetorical needs for its audience. While the interpretation is creative and sometimes imaginary, it frequently deals with events or realities, both pleasant and unpleasant, which have actually

happened to the community in which the fantasy chains out. The Keillor monologues are that kind of interpretive narration. Even when the group fantasy or the fantasy spun out by Keillor seems "made up," it usually has a reality-based referent, and the artful additions made by the Keillor's audience merely mask the reality which is being symbolically interpreted (Bormann, 1985). When Bormann, his students and others do "fantasy theme analysis," they search their sample of rhetorical artifacts (e.g., speech manuscripts, news or magazine articles, films, leaflets, posters, signs, phamphlets, song lyrics, hymns, radio or television scripts, etc.) for these central themes or images which have sparked the chaining process. When they find evidence of chaining, it indicates that symbolic convergence is occurring or has occurred. Shortly, we shall see numerous examples of such chaining in the APHC phenomenon.

Sometimes these fantasies emerge from "the ground-up" as might be the case with the anti-war movement where the image of a mass movement capable of changing foreign policy emerged from the grass roots. Another example is our images of the first Thanksgiving which have developed from what might be termed a "Folk Consciousness." At other times, however, these fantasies can be generated by an articulate and artistic creator as might be the case with Roosevelt's "New Deal," the river stories and characters of Mark Twain, or the Lake Wobegon of Garrison Keillor who has been

compared to Twain and whose cutting satire has, like Twain's, often been missed by popular critics.

A major criticism of symbolic convergence theory and its methodology, fantasy theme analysis, is that those proposing and using it never clearly identify or demonstrate how it is used (Mohrmann, 1982a, 1982b). That is, how does one know when a fantasy has chained out? What are the kinds of evidence to look for to identify a fantasy theme? In other words, how does this methodology work? Bormann has attempted to provide several answers in The Force of Fantasy when he notes some symptoms of the convergence. Many of them occur in the audience reactions of APHC listeners. Some of them are:

1.The repetition of dramatizing material and wordplay such as puns, narratives, analogies and other figures of speech.

2. Cryptic allusions to shared fantasies or symbolic convergence.

3. References to dramatic personal experiences, both pleasant and unpleasant.

4. Inside references and sometimes in-jokes which only the symbolic convergants can "get". These might be in the form of a slogan, a salute or other non-verbal sign (e.g., the peace sign or the raised fist), a reference to a real or imaginary person, place or event (e.g., " McCarthyism," "Hoovervilles," or "Remember Pearl Harbor" etc.), and code

words and phrases (e.g.,"I Found It," "Hell no! We won't go!" or MADD).

5. The physical symptoms like facial expression, laughter, groaning, verbal exclamations like "Right on!"

6. Fantasy Themes are ordered, artistic, giving praise or laying blame, slanted, and interpretive.

7. They frequently involve some sort of consciousness raising or proselytizing activity, usually in the small group setting.

8. Some sort of visual image may be identified with the symbolic convergence--an emblem like the swastika or Christian cross, or perhaps an individual who is the visible spokesperson for the vision.

The important thing about these symptoms of fantasy chaining is that they could not serve as triggers for shared meaning unless the audience had first engaged in some kind of fantasy chaining. In other words, the shared fantasy has led to some kind of interpretation of previously confounding data or experience.

When a number of these shared fantasies are observed in different times and places involving larger sets of participants, Bormann maintains a "fantasy type" exists (Bormann, 1985). It may be archetypal in nature, thus serving as a symbolic "short-cut" to the convergence. Bormann cites the "Rebirth" or "Pauline conversion" fantasies as typical of many religious and reform

persuaders. Reference to the Latin American policy of the Reagan administration as potentially "Another Vietnam" is another example (Bormann, 1985). As the archetypes become more abstract, use more symbolic shortcuts, and as participants become more unified in spite of potential dissimilarities, a "Rhetorical Vision" emerges. This is a diverse set of similar fantasy themes or types which cluster around some sort of "Master Analogy" or dramatizing message which unifies the various fantasy types and their symbolic convergants. Lake Wobegon itself is such an analog. Other examples might be "The New Left," "Born Again," "The Moral Majority," or "Women's Liberation" (Bormann, 1985).

Once the fantasy themes have been identified, the critic then attempts to flesh out the details of the theme typology or Rhetorical Vision in an attempt to identify the predominating values of the symbolic convergents. Bormann suggests the following kinds of questions be asked of the chained messages:

Who are the outsiders? What are their values? What objects, places or settings are sacred to them? Who are the insiders? What are their values? What is their preferred lifestyle? Is there any sacred ground or place for the vision? What is it like? What is the profane ground or place? What is it like? Are there any sacred or profane objects or acts? Are there any ritualistic acts which indicate membership in the rhetorical community? Are there

any non-verbal indications of membership such as uniforms (e.g., articles of clothing such as the red and white dresses of the "Stop E.R.A." groups), salutes, theme songs (e.g.,"We Shall Not Be Moved" or "Solidarity Forever"), or other paraphernalia indicating membership in the vision? And other similar questions can indicate the richness of the vision, its boundaries and motives (Bormann, 1985).

While Bormann's study in The Force of Fantasy focuses on how fantasy themes and rhetorical visions were promulgated using the public speeches of the 19th century, fantasies and visions are also appealing to contemporary mass media because of their dramatic potential. They can capture and hold an audience's attention. In terms of modern marketing terminology, they can deliver "a share of the market" for a particular ideology, product or candidate. Bormann's students and followers have demonstrated this power of fantasy theme analysis with audiences ranging from firefighters to farm managers to voters in presidential elections (Cragan and Sheilds, 1980).

For our purposes, fantasy theme analysis and symbolic convergence theory offer a plausible explanation for the process questions concerning APHC. How was a large "share of the market" captured by a live musical variety radio program with hypothetical sponsors and characters and events which happen in a hypothetical town in the center of

Minnesota and "How" did this happen at a time when live musical variety is essentially dead? The answer is that the Keillor monologues are fantasies which caught up large numbers of listeners who added their own details to the stories until they formed a "Master Analogy" for the audience. This is the vision of Lake Wobegon. It has become a lodestone for and expresses the values of a certain rhetorical community or market segment.

Evidence of Symbolic Convergence

Recalling the kinds of evidence used to identify a fantasy theme or a rhetorical vision, let us examine the kinds of things which might indicate that APHC's symbolic center--Lake Wobegon, Minnesota--has chained out as a Rhetorical Vision?

Of course the sales of Keillor's national bestseller--Lake Wobegon Days--and the sales of the Lake Wobegon audio tapes indicate chaining-out to some degree. It is reasonable to assume that the public has to be familiar with the concept of Lake Wobegon before purchasing it for nearly twenty dollars or before purchasing a set of four tapes for thirty dollars. Sales of the book prompted Time magazine writers John Skow and Jack White to observe in their November 4, 1985 cover story on Keillor and the show that:

Keillor clearly has touched people with something more

> than a deft commedian's cleverness. . . .Whatever the case, to be a Midwesterner or to know someone who is suddenly is fashionable (Skow and White, p. 70).

Of course the article itself is evidence of chaining. As Bormann noted, the symbolic cues and shortcuts only work because the fantasy has chained out. Several other good examples of this chaining occurred during a Chicago broadcast interview with Keillor during Chicago radio station WGN's weekly phone-in talk show, "Extension 720"--which is hosted by University of Chicago Professor, Milton Rosenberg. As the interview progressed, Rosenberg's questions revealed that, while he may have perused the book, he was unfamiliar with the rhetorical vision of Lake Wobegon and hence was unable to "cue-in" to the symbolic convergence which obviously existed between Keillor and his audience. For instance, a listener called in to ask " How's old tomato-butt doing?" This is a reference to a newscast from Lake Wobegon featured on the best-selling audio tapes in which Keillor recounts having been forced to pick tomatoes in the early fall with his sister. During the picking, she bent over at the same time that he found a huge overripe tomato thus providing an admirable target, and he couldn't resist the temptation--hence the nickname for his sister (Keillor, 1983b). The audience member and other APHC listeners could enjoy the shared meaning referred to by the verbal shortcut. Rosenberg, unfamiliar with the reference to the vision, noted that the listener must be a personal

friend of Keillor and was astounded when Keillor responded that no, the caller was personally unknown to Keillor, but that it was clear that the listener had obviously visited Lake Wobegon. This double entendre' completely baffled the poor professor who was even more surprised when the next question came from a listener who invited Keillor to his house to see the perfect replica of Lake Wobegon he had made for his model electric train layout. The caller reported that the layout was complete with a little station and a little man who walked out and swung a little railroad lantern and little cattle that climbed a little loading ramp and went into a little cattle car--details from another monologue included on the "News from Lake Wobegon" tapes. In the monologue, James Lundeen's father, Mel (who is the rural mail carrier in Lake Wobegon), is injured in a fall from a rooftop. As a result James doesn't get the hoped-for Lionel electric train set up described by the listener for Christmas. James discovers instead that the view of the real Lake Wobegon from the surface of the frozen lake is just as pleasing as the electric train layout and that his father's recovery from the accident was the real Christmas gift that year (Keillor, 1983d). And of course, there were numerous other examples of listeners referring to people, places, and events in Lake Wobegon during the two hour broadcast. Professor Rosenberg seemed mystified throughout.

Further evidence that the vision of Lake Wobegon has chained out to a large mass audience is the sales of a wide variety of APHC paraphernalia available through MPR and marketed through the station's 32 page catalog, Wireless (Minnesota Public Radio, "Wireless", 1985). For example there are several kinds of tee-shirts. One features the logo of Lake Wobegon's native product--Powdermilk Biscuits--and some of the lyrics from the product's jingle "Has Your Family Tried 'Em--Powdermilk?" which is sung by Keillor and the audience at the start of each show is commercial for the product much as the theme songs of other rhetorical visions were sung at the start of rallies, marches or meetings. Another shirt has the coat of arms of Lake Wobegon, which features the figures of two Norwegian bachelor farmers engaged in raising and harvesting the wheat used in making Powdermilk Biscuits, piles of the biscuits on a platter, a radio microphone and the town's slogan "Sumus Quid Sumus" or " We Are What We Are". These are central symbols of the vision. A third shirt has a holstein cow on it and announces that Lake Wobegon is "Gateway to Central Minnesota"--the sacred ground of the vision. Another advertises "Raw Bits," a hearty breakfast cereal for macho types which is made from oat hulls and wheat chaff. One can also order a uniform for the town's hardball team, The Lake Wobegon Whippets, complete with a jersey with the blazing Whippets logo on it. The words "Lake Wobegon Minnesota" are printed on the back. I

recently wore the uniform to a Chicago Cubs game and had several persons come up and make a reference to the show or the team which also indicated chaining (e.g., "You're certainly not a shy person," and "Are the Whippets playing the Uff Da's this week?"). MPR also sells various record albums and tapes of the show, its guest performers, its hypothetical sponsors (e.g.,Bertha's Kitty Boutique, The Fearmonger's Shop, and the Hotel Minnesota), a book of the the poems of Margaret Haskins Durber, the town's Poet Laureate (in reality the alter ego of Garrison Keillor) and of course selected versions of "The News from Lake Wobegon". Sales of these and other APHC related paraphernalia (e.g., Powdermilk Biscuits postcards, banners, bumper stickers announcing that the vehicle has been to "Lake Wobegon Minnesota, Gateway to Central Minnesota" etc.) again demonstrate the chaining of the Lake Wobegon vision to a large mass audience which would have no interest in the paraphernalia if they had not chained into the Lake Wobegon vision. Of course the use of the various codewords in or on the paraphernalia are another index of the chaining.

A fourth source of evidence that the rhetorical vision of Lake Wobegon has chained out are the many references to the show and its host in a wide variety of national media including Time, Rolling Stone and numerous large and small newspapers (e.g., The Washington Post, The Chicago Tribune, The Greensboro News and Record, U.S.A. Weekend, The Chicago

Sun Times, The Martinsville Indiana Reporter, The Rockford Register Star, The Other Side, and The DeKalb Daily Chronicle, The Atlantic magazine, Republic Airlines' The Republic Scene, Blair and Ketchum's Country Journal and many others). Interestingly enough, my knowledge of many of these references has not come from my own research but from persons to whom I have introduced APHC--former students who have moved to various cities and have read about the show in local media, forwarding copies to me, colleagues, community and business acquaintances and neighbors who know of my interest in the show and regularly hand me clippings about it from various media. This pattern of participating with the vision can also serve as evidence of the chaining out of the Lake Wobegon vision. The common thread running through these national and local references is the specificity of references to Lake Wobegon like the references to the slogan of Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery--"If You Can't Find It at Ralph's, You Can Probably Get Along Without It," "Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility," "The Statue of the Unknown Norwegian," "Walleye Lip Soup" at The Chatterbox Cafe, "Snake Proof Toilet Seats" from "The Fearmonger's Shop," "Bob's Bank--In the Little Green Mobile Home at the End of Main Street" where the motto is "Neither a Borrower not a Lender Be" and slogan is "Save at the Sign of the Sock" over the logo which is a neon sock, or the giant duck decoys made at "The Sons of Knute," a fraternal

lodge for Norwegians headed by the "Grand OhYa" who opens each meeting by chanting "Oh, Yah" to the gathered lodge brothers. Perhaps the most dramatic of these specific references as cues to the symbolic convergence of the Lake Wobegon rhetorical vision was the four-color, two-page, double-truck, "map" of Lake Wobegon designed by the artist, Bud Sagendorf, cartoonist for "Popeye" which covered the center two pages of the January, 1982 Country Journal (Singer, 1982).

Fifth, there are facts such as these: the Minnesota branch of the AAA receives more requests for routing to Lake Wobegon than for any other Minnesota town, and it includes a visitors' guide to Lake Wobegon in its literature on Minesota sights of interest; the College of St. Benedict advertises its location to prospective students as "70 miles northwest of the Twin Cities (not that far from Lake Wobegon"); and the post office receives more requests for the town's zipcode than for any other in Minnesota. These all testify to the fact that the Lake Wobegon Vision has chained out, resulting in symbolic convergence for several million persons. It is doubtful that the same claim could be made for any other radio program on public or commercial radio.

One needs only to listen to APHC once to hear the kinds of groans, laughs, group singing, and references to the Lake Wobegon vision which typify the chaining characteristics

described by Bormann. For example in reviewing the traveling broadcast in Washington D.C., (which was sold out before radio affiliates had a chance to put up posters promoting the show) Mpls./St. Paul noted that there were differences between the hometown audience and the D.C. crowd: "They couldn't get up the courage to belt out 'Powdermilk!' in the correct spots of the opening commercial. But by the end of the two-hour show, they were hollering and singing along." ("Keeling Over Keillor, Mpls/St.Paul,1981). These responses are encouraged through the system of "greetings" used by Keillor during the show. Live audience members are given the opportunity to jot a message which might be read over the air. These are collected and reviewed during the first hour of the show for reading during the second half. Radio listeners can mail in messages as well, and many are read over the air. Both the live audience and the mailed-in greetings frequently contain references to the kinds of shortcut cues to symbolic convergence noted earlier. For instance, a greeting might read: "Greetings to a shy bachelor Norwegian in San Francisco from a biscuit-loving girl in the Twin Cities" or " To Bob, who really cares about cats and is nearly 40--from his parents at the Sons of Knute". These references offer further evidence for the chaining.

In short, it seems clear that the vision of Lake Wobegon has "caught up" the imaginations of several million

listeners and numerous mass media reporters. Lake Wobegon seems to be a master trope for a rhetorical vision of the values of smallness and a smalltown, midwestern community-minded lifestyle. In terms of the "process" or "how" aspect of the APHC phenomenon, Fantasy Theme Analysis seems to provide an excellent process explanation for its popularity. The "why" or motivational aspect, as Bormann and his students have pointed out, lies in the manifest content of the vision--the verbal symbols which are chosen and highlighted by not only the originator of the vision but by its adherents. This leads us to the work of Tony Schwartz and particularly his "Resonance" or "Evoked Recall" theory.

Evoked Recall Theory

In his book The Responsive Chord, Tony Schwartz compares an approach to mass media which he says focuses on the movement of information into the conscious memories of the audience with what he refers to as "Evoked Recall" or getting experiential memories out of audience's subconscious memories. Like Garrison Keillor, he too is a child of radio and his Resonance Theory of mass communication flows from his radio experiences. As he puts it:

> "Radio and I grew up together, and my ear developed a sensitivity to audio communication which carried over into other areas of my life. I couldn't read, work, or do homework without the radio on. My mother often complained that people could not read and listen at the same time. . . .I examined my own listening habits very

carefully and noticed that I was oscillating in my reception of auditory and visual stimuli. . . .Although I was not simultaneously perceiving two sensory inputs, the oscillation process was so quick that I could readily absorb distinct auditory and visual information occurring simultaneously" (Schwartz, 1973).

These roots in the radio experience together with Schwartz's friendship with both Marshall McLuhan and Joe Napolitan occurred at about the same time Schwartz was earning "fame" as a producer of political television and radio spot advertisements. His most famous political spot was the "Daisy" ad of the campaign of 1964 which vividly tied Barry Goldwater to the fear of nuclear war using familiar visual and auditory images--a little girl counting ten petals of a daisy, a nuclear countdown from ten to zero, and a mushroom-shaped cloud. The ad clearly demonstrates his resonance theory--the image of the countdown and mushroom shaped cloud "resonated" with complex memories in the 1964 audience's conscious and subconscious mind (e.g., some of Goldwater's statements during the primaries about sending nuclear weapons to field commanders in Viet Nam or memories of the many televised atomic tests in which "test" houses and mannequins were destroyed, etc.). These resonating images and memories are evoked by cues to past experiences. Schwartz compares his "Resonance Theory" of mass communication with what he calls "Transportation Theories of Communication" in which "meaning" (usually encapsulated in words) is moved or transported, as if on a conveyor belt,

from the mind of a sender to the mind of a receiver. In his Resonance Theory of evoked recall, certain cues strike "a responsive chord(s)" in the audience's conscious and subconscious memory, often triggering complex memory networks involving entire arrays of meaning which are usually experientially recorded in the mind of the audience. Thus instead of transporting information into the audience's mind, in a linear fashion, the striking of a responsive chord cues meanings out of the audience in what is referred to as "Evoked Recall" (Schwartz, 1973. Larson, 1982). Schwartz ties the difference to the way in which we process electronically transmitted information. He puts it this way:

> Television and film, as well as radio and records have contributed to a radical transformation in our perception of the world--from a visual, print base to an auditory base. (causing). . .the brain to receive and process all information in the same way it has always processed information via the ear. . . .We never hear the continuum of sound we label as a word, sentence or paragraph. . . Rather we piece bits of information (millisecond vibrations) together."(Schwartz, 1973).

The striking of the responsive chord or resonance is thus tied to the mind of the receiver, and in prompting it out,

> "The communicator's problem is not to get stimuli across, or even to package his stimuli so they can be understood and absorbed. Rather he must deeply understand the kinds of information and experiences stored in his audience, the patterning of this information, and the interactive resonance process whereby stimuli evoke this stored information. . . . much of the material stored in the brains of an audience is also stored in the brain of a communicator by virtue of our shared media environment."

So the task of the communicator is to identify those experiential memories (pleasant or unpleasant) that are poignant enough to be prompted out with simple cues; then to recount those in a believable and usually experiential or dramatic mode. This, of course, is precisely what the Keillor monologues succeed so well in doing.

The Evoked Vision and APHC's Audience

When we combine the "How" theory of symbolic convergence, with the "Why" theory of resonance, there emerges a hybrid which might be called an "Evoked Vision". Here the Rhetorical Vision "catches on" because it "resonates" with experiential memories in the audience's conscious or subconscious memory which are artfully and dramatically cued out. Thus the critic's questions in fantasy theme analysis must always be linked with the audience's experiential memories. A good example which always draws laughter from the live audience and presumably from the radio audience as well is Ralph's Pretty Good Grocery Store. Most persons have been in a small town grocery store where the proprieter is like Ralph, who feels if he hasn't got it, you can just get along without it. Having experienced our own "Ralph's," we "chain-in" and "resonate" with Keillor's character. That character is then linked to other poignant and often satirical references such as Ralph's "Junk Food Service" wherein you can order all the

Twinkies, chips, and bean dip you want, but it will be wrapped in brown paper marked "Fresh Sprouts." The play on the spoiled and posturing urban lifestyle is clear. Thus it is what is in the audience's experience and memory that is critical in explaining WHY something chained out. This necessarily leads us to the matter of audience analysis. Keillor has cleverly targeted his monologues at a certain kind of person.

What kind of audience does APHC target and what are their experiential memories likely to contain? The audience of APHC is diverse, but anyone who has gone to a live performance knows that, while the theatre audience ranges in age from young children to grandparents, the majority of the audience members are in their middle years. They are well-educated, socially conscious, middle class, and urban dwellers. They have an "L.L. Bean" look and would fit the category labeled "Societally Conscious Achievers" by William Meyers in his book The Image Makers. (Meyers, 1986). Good examples of this target audience are found in the ten listener profiles which were included in the APHC 10th anniversary program. APHC considers them typical listeners:

1. Dianne and Myles Myers, ages 49 and 65, Ham Radio and quilting are their hobbies. Myles maintains a large historic apartment house in his retirement.

2. Heidi and Steven Saslow, ages 37 and 43, met in the Berkely Free Speech Movement, and teach pre-school and classical guitar.

3. Peter Becker, age 42 who is a clam fisherman.

4. Karen Wolfson, age 42, a saleswoman for a large corporation who likes to eat and find exotic food.

5. Betty Gowling and Mike Boyd, ages 36 and 42, are teaching the hearing impaired and designing and developing training materials. They like swimming and walking.

6. Chad Slattery, age 36, collects insect-eating plants and takes extended trips around the world collecting transformer "thing-ies."

7. Margaret Campbell, age 39, raises geese and paints eggs, while earning a living as a writer. Lives in a cabin by the sea.

8. Patricia Stein age 34, studying "Diplomacy and Weapons Systems" at Fletcher School who says she is "A child of the 60's, matured by the 70's and worried in the 80's"

9. Eileen Erickson and Chuck Sillance ages 30 and 34, grew up with the idea that they "shouldn't have holes in their underwear."

10. Dot and Dart Peterson, ages 58 and 60, who maintain and show a 1964 Studebaker. Dot does a lot of volunteer work.

In other words, the listeners are for the most part "baby-boomers" trailing out to those who were children of the depression years. They grew up with the magic of radio's lighted dial and probably remember getting their first television during the 50's. They know the fear of nuclear war and bombshelters. They can recall where they were when they heard of the assassinations the Kennedy brothers and Martin Luther King. They remember "Ozzie and Harriet," "Father Knows Best," "My Little Margie," "Our Miss Brooks" and the Cleavers, all of whom were model urban

American dwellers. They experienced the exhilaration and then the disillusionment of the Civil Rights movement. They were tempered by the bitterness of the Vietnam war, and outraged by the embarrassment of Watergate. They are into things like natural foods, jogging, and smallness, but are probably disillusioned with the contemporary world which seems more concerned with success and image. They probably feel that "things are in the saddle and ride mankind." A critical feature about this set of people is that they have lost their innocence. They wish the world didn't demand so much of them, that things weren't so uncertain, and that altruism really did exist. They know that cities are problematic, that people aren't always nice, that there isn't very much you can count on now-a-days, that things were simpler back then, but that you have to live with these "facts of life." What is there in Lake Wobegon that so appeals to them? Let us "flesh-out" the Vision which Keillor has evoked in his audience listening for those kinds of experiential references which are likely to "resonate" with this particular set of persons.

The Evoked Vision of "Lake Wobegon."

Lake Wobegon is a small town in central Minnesota with a population of about 900 persons, similar to the size of the live audience for the show. It is located on the shores

of Lake Wobegon, a spring-fed lake which is 678.2 acres and is drained by a small creek, the Wobegon River. The town was left off of the map of Minnesota during the great land survey of 1872 when the surveyors discovered that they had over-estimated the size of the state by surveying parts of both Dakotas, Iowa, Wisconsin and Ontario into Minnesota. To coverup their error, they folded their maps so that the exact center of the state was and remains hidden (Keillor, 1985). That center is the location of the town and explains why you will not find it on any map. The town was started by German Catholics who had misread their maps but refused to admit that fact and by Norwegian Lutherans who had gone to settle by the shores of Lake Agassiz in North Dakota only to discover that the lake was a pre-historic relic, thus necessitating finding another lake--this time a real one (which, ironically, only exists in imagination). So religiously speaking the town is about 50/50 Catholic and Lutheran, although the first missionaries sent there were Unitarian who hoped to convert the Ojibway through the use of interpretive dance. Church is a central part of life in Lake Wobegon at both Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility and at Lake Wobegon Lutheran. There is another sect in town--the Church of the Sanctified Bretheren of which Keillor claims to have been a member. It met in his youth in Uncle Al and Aunt Flo's bare living room to meditate, sing and pray until the pot roast was done. The sect didn't

believe in dancing, card-playing (except for Rook or Flinch), smoking, drinking, women's slacks, the movies, or television (except for the Parade of Roses). That didn't leave much in the way of fun and made for embarassments from time to time--like Keillor's father's car which had all sorts of religious statements on the license plate holders ("The Wages of Sin is Death") and a compass with the words, "I Am the Way" inscribed on it. Keillor says he hid it, when on a date, by hanging his hat on it.

The town is the county seat of tiny Mist County and is the site of the discovery of the Lake Wobegon Runestone. The stone proves that Norwegian Vikings visited the town in 1381 leaving a note which said " 8 of (us) stopped & stayed awhile to visit and have (coffee) & a short nap. Sorry (you) weren't here. Well, that's about (it) for now." The stone is a parody of the Kensington Runestone discovered in Kensington Minnesota, not far away which ultimately proved to be a hoax. Lake Wobegon's stone is brought up to the school every Columbus day to remind some of the children of their Scandinavian heritage (Keillor, 1985).

The Norwegian descendants in the town think America should have been named "Erica" after the vikings and their leader, Eric the Red. The U.S.A. would thus become the U.S.E. or the United States of Erica, and we would sing "Erica the Beautiful." The men spend much of their time at the "Sons of Knute " lodge hall, and the women at "Naomi Circle" at Lake Wobegon Lutheran. Many of the men are bachelor farmers, perhaps because of the sexual repression typical of Lutherans--especially those of the 50's. They are honored by the Statue to the Unknown Norwegian which stands near the Wally "Old Hard Hands" Bunsen memorial baseball diamond (Wally died after getting beaned by his own foul tick). The Unknown is:

> "A proud figure, his back is erect, his feet are on the ground on account of no money remained for a pedestal, and his eyes--well his eyes are a matter of question. . .his eyes are set a little deep so that dark shadows appear in the late afternoon and by sunset he looks worried."(Keillor, Stories, 92-3).

Somehow a piece of grass grows out of his ear, and no amount of weed killer administered by Bud, the town's maintainance man, can kill it. Bothered by this failure, Bud clips it every week when he rides by mowing the ball field (Keillor, Lake Wobegon Stories, 1985.). Among living Norwegians, Hjalmar Ingqvist, a town father, is a good example. He remembers his grandfather who bought the local flour mill in 1908 when the owner, Mr. Weeks panicked after three years of bad crops. Hjalmer's grandfather had managed the mill's

books for some years and so recognized a bargain. He campaigned for the use of English instead of Norwegian in the Lutheran church. Clarence Bunsen, owner of Bunsen motors--the Ford dealership in town--and another Norwegian Lutheran (the Lutherans all drive Fords) says of Inqvist and his cause, "Of course, America had been good to him. . . The rich can afford to be progressive. Poor people have reason to be afraid of the future." (Keillor, Stories 1985). The Norwegians, especially the bachelor farmers, reject modern and up-to-date innovations preferring the older and tried-and-true ways of doing things. For this reason, much of the wheat grown for the production of Powdermilk biscuits is planted using big, black Belgian horses. The Norwegian farmer frequently blesses his seed as it is drilled with the words "Herre Gott," and the horses sometimes add their own organic blessing.

The German descendants seem more likely to be merchants or entrepreneurs in town as witnessed by the town's business establishments--Fritz Electronics where you can put things "on the Fritz," Jack Kreuger's many businesses, Main Garage, the Chevy dealership (the Catholics in town all drive Chevies) or the town's newspaper, the Lake Wobegon Herald Star whose editor is named Harold Star. Their priest, Father Emil, is strict, hearing confession over the phone even during blizzards, which can be problematic when

you have party lines as they do in Lake Wobegon. He's as likely to say "Shame on You!" as " Your sins are forgiven."

Both the Catholic and the Lutheran congregations frown on the new liberalism in religion. They are death on the secular humanists. Father Emil's seminarian assistant, Father Bob, likes golf and once preached on "The Back Nine of Life" to the dissatisfaction of many in the congregation that day. A replacement seminarian for Pastor Inqvist preached for 45 minutes before being finally interrupted by three deacons who had a simultaneous coughing fit that somehow wouldn't stop. He is no longer in the seminary but now heads the sales division of Devotional Systems Inc. They make quadrophonic sanctuary speakers, home devotionals on floppy disks, and individual bio-feedback devices for the pews of suburban churches.

The morality of the town is simple and centers on the family, the church, and relations with one's neighbors. Townspeople usually reveal a healthy scepticism, especially about the complex world outside of town. For example Jack, of Jack's Auto Repair, also operates Jack's "One Hole Lake Wobegon Golf Course." He feels that if you want to play nine holes of golf that bad, then play this one nine times. He is the town's key entrepreneur and operates numerous businesses which spoof the soft city life. For example, he operates a "Warm Car Service" which delivers your pre-started and warmed-up car to your doorstep on cold

Minnesota winter days. His "School of Thought" is a "Headstop Program" to counter the various "Headstart" programs. He claims it's for the rehabilitation of the overly-educated and teaches them to enjoy things like bowling, hanging around, or piling pebbles together into mounds and then tossing other pebbles at them.

The citizens of Lake Wobegon do many of the same things each of us has done. Take Bud, the town's maintainance man, who while digging a grave, tells a ghost story to the two Deiner boys and scares their pants off. They wondered about what dead bodies look like and if Bud had ever dug one up. He tells the story of the young boy who died of diptheria and whose faithful collie wouldn't leave the grave, finally forcing the body to be exhumed. The dog must have known something according to Bud because when they opened the little coffin, do you know what they saw?

"Well, sir what they saw inside, it just tore their hearts out, it was so horrible. People took one look and turned away, sick. The boy's eyes were wide open and his face looked like he was screaming. His face was all bloody and so was his hands. He had clawed the cloth off the lid and scratched the wood and had torn off half his clothes and scratched his face to ribbons. You see they had buried him alive."(Keillor, Stories :197).

Bud's story is a familiar one. Each of us has heard it and probably has enjoyed retelling it in order to scare someone else, remembering our own creepy fears on first hearing it. Bud is like us, as are most of the citizens like Jack or

Clarence or Ralph, and their foibles and their strengths (as well as ours) are reconstructed from our memories of persons we once knew, liked, or disliked.

In Lake Wobegon, waste is a mortal sin as noted by Dorothy who owns and "presides" over the Chatterbox Cafe, "The Place to Go That's Just Like Home" and where you are permitted to "Eat as much as you like as long as you clean your plate--no doggy bags!" She serves tuna hotdish with cream of mushroom soup and potato chips on top on most Fridays and follows it with a square of red Jello with mayo and walnuts on top. Once a year she has "School Lunch Week" which is traditionally finished off with Mystery Meat, Green Jello with carrots scraped into it, cole slaw and pineapple Ting-a-Lings. Since waste is a sin, thrift is a virtue, good examples of which are the universal vegetable garden and home canning. They are like contests in Lake Wobegon with endless comparisons being made on the size of one's tomatoes or the number of quarts of this or that already "put up." Another example of the value of thrift is seen in the loan policy at Bob's Bank. In order to get a loan from Bob's Bank, you have to be cross examined on your spending habits by Bob himself. He is especially critical of old check registers showing lots of checks made out for "cash" or to restaurants. One of the town's exiles (presumably Keillor) objected to this emphasis on thrift in one of a series of 95

theses which he nailed to the door of Lake Wobegon Lutheran. It is addressed to a parent:

> " 884. I took you to a famous steakhouse on your anniversary. You agonized over the menu and ordered the cheapest thing. I pleaded. I argued. I ordered the prime rib. I felt guilty as I ate it, just as you intended." (Keillor, Stories :271).

Keillor recalls worrying about having to go to the poorhouse because of extravagance at Christmas:

> "Where the poorhouse was I didn't know, but I imagined it as a gray stone house with cold dank walls where people were sent as a punishment for having too much fun. People who spent twelve dollars here and twelve dollars there, thinking there was more were that came from. . . ." (Keillor, Stories: 233)

"Honoring thy father and thy mother" is also a virtue as is remembering one's heritage. These are demonstrated in on-going stories about many of the town's families, a special reverence for the memories of one's forbears, the continuance of ancestral modes of farming, especially those using big, black, Belgian, work-horses, and in the Statue of the Unknown Norwegian. This sacred ground doesn't change very much because it exists in one's mind and because as Keillor says of the town each week in his monologue, it is "The Little Town That Time Forgot; That the Decades Cannot Improve." Yet for all its unchangability, Lake Wobegon is strikingly contemporary and its people, their strengths and weaknesses and their values resemble our own. For example, author of the same 95 Theses (noted earlier) comments on the

town's bigotry and depicts a position with which we are all familiar.

"#62. Bigotry is never a pleasant subject so you didn't bring it up but you stuck by your guns anyway. Indians were drunks. Jews were theives, and the colored were shiftless. Where you got this, I don't know, because there were none of them around, but you believed it more absolutely for the utter lack of evidence. Everyone knew about those people. It was common sense." (Keillor, Stories: 267).

The "News from Lake Wobegon", whether pleasantly nostalgic or bitterly satirical, is about us too.

The preferred lifestyle of Lake Wobegon is equally uncomplicated consisting of simple pleasures, honestly gotten, richly savored, and rarely ostentatious. These pleasures might include the time a child has to visit or sing with a parent while drying the dishes; lemon meringue pie at the Chatterbox; watching the Whippets lose; ice-fishing; a beer and a bump at the Sidetrack Tap; one of the town's annual events such as the Toast Toss at "Toast and Jelly Days"; the Christmas program at church; sales at Skoglund's Five and Dime--"Where things really do cost just a dime!"; a movie at "Knights in the Gardens of Spain," and if the movie is boring, just watching the little twinkle lights and the clouds that roll back and forth on pulleys in the ceiling of the theatre. The days in Lake Wobegon are associated with family events and reunions punctuated by the many celebrations and important days in town--the Feast of St. Francis--a community event where all the animals are

brought into town to be blessed by Father Emil (Keillor recounts thinking that there was a circus in town--poignant testimony to his own austere cultural life which he often satirically lambasts). Then there is graduation from Lake Wobegon High School, the Memorial Day service at the cemetery where the kids scramble for the empty rifle casings after the 3 gun salute; the opening of the duck season, the season opener for the Whippets, planting and harvest, and of course the regular holidays of the two churches. The lifestyle of Lake Wobegon is that of small town America, especially in the Midwest. It is a place to which we have all either lived or visited during our summer vacations. It is a microcosm of the neighborhoods and hometowns of APHC's listeners. It is also a touchstone for a highly mobile society; it reminds us that even simple things can be enjoyed and that human relationships are more important than "getting ahead."

The things which are held sacred by the townspeople are of course, family and church, but also respect and empathy for the other person, a sense of humor--dry or earthy, the ability to cherish memories, being able to forgive and forget, and a willingness to go along with a joke. They are the things we need in a rapidly changing society, especially when we recall the slow pace of the days of our youth.

While these things are sacred, the pomposity of modern life and people who take themselves too seriously are

frequently seen as profane. The citizens of Lake Wobegon often parody the pomposity of the outside world in order to express their contempt for high falutin' snobs and know-it-alls, most of whom come from "The Cities". Not surprisingly, there are no support or therapy groups like they have in the Cities in Lake Wobegon (except for cat owners who tend to become depressed when their pets reject human affection. Bertha's Kitty Boutique exists for them as a parody on spoiled, single, professional urban yuppies). No one (except college kids home on vacation) jogs for exercise--they find work instead. Nobody is into the nuclear freeze in Lake Wobegon, because it is already too cold in Minnesota. Instead patriotism is an important virtue as shown by the "Living Flag," a parody of all small town parades. On Flag Day, all the residents wear their red, white, or blue "feed caps" and line up so as to form a replica of the stars and stripes. The idea dates to the visit of an itinerant cap salesman who convinced the city fathers that the event would be unique in all of Minnesota. The problem is that no one can see it, since they're all in it. Someone once tried to fasten a huge mirror to the top of the three story Central Building so participants could look up and get an idea of the overall effect. But when people looked up to see the reflected image, they tipped their heads back and the flag disappeared. These events and their ability to trigger networks of memory, permit us to

laugh at ourselves and are at the core of the weekly "News from Lake Wobegon".

The profane ground in the Lake Wobegon vision is almost always "The Cities" referring to Minneapolis, St. Paul and sometimes St. Cloud but really referring to all city life. In cities, one rarely finds caring neighbors or generous strangers but instead encounters self-centered and niggardly folks who ignore the plight of others and are just out for number one. The cities dilute what is good in life. As one of the town's residents--an old Norwegian bachelor farmer--remarked after ordering a brandy at a fancy restaurant where he was taken for dinner with his neice and her family, " God Damn! Two bucks for a brandy, and they fill your glass with ice!"(Keillor, 1982a). People in the cities are too afraid of nature--especially the weather. Most of them won't even go out in a blizzard. They don't even don't know How to Tell A Tornado (Mohr, 1981). These and other flaws probably sound familiar to the target audience of APHC and are typical of folks "from the cities." Since the major export of Lake Wobegon (other than Powdermilk biscuits) is eighteen year olds--the graduating seniors who head down to "the Cities,"--there is never a shortage of stories about the urban life where survival is a hectic rat race, where people lack substance, are wasteful, flawed, and are too impressed with things like Calvin Klein

eyeglasses from Vanity Vision, vintage wines, ". . .flaming deserts and Arturo and his Boulevard Violins"(Keillor, Stories, 212). Almost every trip to the cities by a resident of the town ends up in a near disaster which reveals the shortcomings of societal pressures, the struggle to get ahead, and the search for pleasure all of which typify city life. As one returning resident reports to Queenie and Gus, his two black Belgian horses, "The Cities are a hell-hole, but some of the people there are nice." (Keillor, 1982a).

The heroes or heroines of the Lake Wobegon vision are simple folk who enact their heroism in the ordinary events of everyday life and in the enactment discover the meaning of their existence. James Lundeen, whom we noted earlier, discovers the importance of his father while walking across the frozen lake on Christmas Eve. Darryl Tollerud who finds himself locked in the granery with his father for an entire day until rescued by his wife Marilyn and discovers the importance of communicating with his dad. Clarence Bunsen who thinks he has had a heart attact and ponders his own mortality while returning to his childhood haunts on a hillside just out of town. There he discovers that today's kids in Lake Wobegon do about the same things as he did as a kid right down to "taking a leak" on the same "peeing rock" Clarence used when he was young. Clarence's obsession with mortality is distracted when he falls from the tree branch

where he has been observing the children and breaks his ankle discovering that life is more than pondering one's mortality. There is also a kind of simple heroism and adventure in the concept of the "Storm Home" where each farm child in the schools is assigned a storm home in town in case of a blizzard. Keillor is fascinated and yet fearful over his storm home with an elderly Catholic couple, the Kloeckls. He didn't tell his parents about the Kloeckls:

> We were suspicious of Catholics, enough to wonder if perhaps the Pope had ordered them to take in little protestant children during blizzards and make them say the Rosary for their suppers.(Keillor, Stories, 248)

Though no blizzards came that year, Keillor felt some confidence because "If the worst should come, I could go to the Kloeckls and knock on their door. 'Hello' I'd say 'I'm your storm child'".

The stories are legion, but their heroes and heroines all seem to demonstrate the valor needed to make it through the everyday pitfalls of modern life, and the value of family, neighbors, community, and friends as support systems. These characters, the Kloeckls, Clarence Bunsen, Darryl Tollerud, Bud Mueller, Jack Kreuger, Bob, Dorothy, Wally and Evelyn and the rest, resonate with our memories of favorite uncles, aunts, cousins, neighbors, and friends, and with our own self images.

Curiously there are few villains in Keillor's vision of Lake Wobegon. In his re-telling of the Christmas Pagent as

directed by Sister Aryonne, (a take-charge sort of nunwho completely rewrites the pagent right down to having Joseph ask Mary "Is it a boy or a girl?") even the innKeeper is kind, and helps Joseph out when it comes to finding out if there would be some swaddling clothes in town (Keillor, "Stories":228). If there are misdeeds, they are unintended or well-meaning like that of the neer-do-well and absentee father of Earl Campbell who invents a bogus family tree linking the Campbells to the royal family of Scotland so that Earl and the rest of the destitute family can have some source of self pride (Keillor,1982b). Only in the 95 Theses do we find Keillor recording a bitter note of near hatred for a parent (for some reason I think the mother):

> 895. Now you call me on the phone to ask," Why don't you ever call us? Why do you shut us out of your life?" So I start telling you about my life, but you don't want to hear it. You want to know why I didn't call. I didn't call because I don't need to talk to you anymore. Your voice is in my head, talking constantly from morning till night. I keep the radio on, but I still hear you and will hear you until I die, when I will hear you say, "I told you so." and then something else will happen.(Keillor, Stories,274)

Even if there are no real villains, there are indeed outsiders or "exiles" who do not understand, share, or live the vision anymore. They are almost always city folk--usually relatives or city-slickers who have come to town for a visit or perhaps to try to fleece the Lake Wobegon citizenry. They have been spoiled by city life, even as the listeners to APHC may feel that they, themselves, have been spoiled. They are usually transparent

in their motivations and have been tainted by having left the town and its simple securities in favor of the cities and their unpredictable pressures. They usually smoke until they get close to town, and then they quit and eat some Sen-Sen so their parents won't suspect. They also drink but never straight like at the Sidetrap Tap--they mess their liquor up with ice, fruit, 7-Up, and things like that. They have unruly kids, and they always argue with one another. It is a relief when they have gone. We feel sorry for them as they head back to the Cities to re-enter the hectic urban life and wonder why they can't calm down.

The ultimate legitimizers of the vision are first the townspeople and then the listeners to the show who "chain in" to the vision. Longing for the simple sincerity of Lake Wobegon, the listeners can be transported by the artfully woven "News" to their own version of small town life. It exists and is legitimized in the television of their minds. The Lake Wobegon vision is also legitimized by the celebration of simple annual rites by the town's inhabitants like holidays, spring cleaning, gardening, canning, confirmation, graduation, the Christmas pageants, and so on. Again the focus is on family, simple pleasures, and human relations and emotions. The celebrations live on most vividly in memories of bygone days. These memories are brought back to the conscious mind by Keillor's weekly monologues, and the audience responses to them (e.g.,

laughter, guffaws, rapt silence and attention, and even tears) indicate ultimate legitimation by the show's audience. Jack, who is the spokesperson for the most cynical of the legitimizers is often critical of the fame and fortune of the "citified" Keillor who is making what Jack perceives of as a "fast buck" from the town. He writes in his congratulatory letter on the show's tenth anniversary:

> To Whomever Is In Charge Down There:
> As the Show's Oldest Benefactor, having supported it since the Nixon administration, I congratulate you on your tenth anniversary of transmission and also take this opportunity to say: Don't make a big thing of it. I've seen lots of shows come and go, including many that were better than yours. People Change. They like something for awhile and then they like something else. Look at yo-yo's. Look at Run Sheep Run. Look at marbles. (M.P.R., Ten Years Later, 1984).

Jack's cynicism sums up the values of the legitimizers and restates the values of the vision--simplicity, humility, caring for one's neighbor, not taking things too seriously, and living with a healthy dose of scepticism.

Conclusion

It is clear that the rhetorical vision of Lake Wobegon, as conceived by Garrison Keillor and disseminated through APHC, has chained out to significant numbers of persons--perhaps as many as five million. They seem to have adopted the values of the vision and have incorporated it into their own lives, undoubtedly richly embedding it with

their own details. Their attachment to the vision is at times almost cultlike. As Time writers Skow and White note, " Those who treasure the program become proselytizers. . . ." They report that Iowa Senator Tom Harkin's staff had to schedule the 1984 campaign around the program, and NBC anchor Tom Brokaw, while denying that he won't invite guests into his home while the program is being aired, does admit that "I just don't pay much attention to them." (1985, p. 70.).

What is so attractive about this vision? What makes it "catch on"? What about it raises the listener's consciousness? One of the show's fans, Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun, puts it this way:

> "Garrison touches a responsive chord in all of us. I hope he stays in Minnesota and doesn't get stolen away by the effete East." ("Keeling Over Keillor", 1982).

Perhaps the vision chains out to this large group of listeners because in Lake Wobegon we find parts of our past and reflections of what we were, what we are, or what we might have become. Even the "dark side" of the "News" and reports of small human cruelties allow us to engage in self-examination. Perhaps we recognize what we have left behind and can never recover and yet what we always nostalgically yearn for--the affection, support, warmth and love of family and neighbors. Or perhaps those are the things that we never had and which never were, but which we know we desperately need to face modern life. The anthem of

Lake Wobegon, "The Song of the Exiles," is instructive in this regard, perhaps because each of is a kind of exile from another time and another place. Lake Wobegon and its song touches those who have left the vision behind and who can only hold fast to its warmth, security and simple beauty in cherished memory and resonating fantasy and vision.

"The Song of he Exiles" (Haskins-Durber,1979)

Skies were blue, my eyes were too,
When I lived in Lake Wobegon
Long ago, and now I know
Joy was mine in my prairie home.
Wheatfields in the month of May,
Wheat beside the long driveway--
Now I buy a box of biscuits to
Remind me of my Wobegon days.

Folks were warm, home on the farm.
Food was good, my clothes were mended.
Then one day, cold and gray,
I packed a grip and moved away.
I look back and shed a tear
to see it in the rearview mirror.
I said I'd be gone a couple months
and now it's been almost twenty years.

Chorus Wobegon!

I remember, O so well how peacefully among the woods and fields you lie.

My Wobegon, I close my eyes, and I can see you just as clearly as in days gone by.

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